

Health Care Debate Intensifies

The health care debate is heating up in Congress over whether government-run health care should be part of "reform," and the public is increasingly saying they don't want this. Last week, the House Education and Labor Committee held a marathon markup session on health care overhaul legislation — lasting for nearly 24 hours — and narrowly passing by a 26-to-22 vote. As a member of the Committee, I anatomized this legislation, concluding that this bill will be bad for economy and will erode the quality of care patients receive. There is no question we need reform in our health care system, but the Majority's so-called "America's Affordable Health Choices Act" proposes socialized medicine as a solution and massive tax increases to pay for it. This takes our country in the wrong direction with higher costs and less quality, and I will do everything I can to fight this misguided approach.

The President keeps promising that if you like your current health plan, you can keep it. However, the plan being rushed through Congress does not fulfill the President's promise. Independent estimates conducted by the Lewin Group conclude that 113 million could lose their private health insurance under this plan because of the government-run public option. This won't happen overnight, but they estimate by the third year of the program, this public plan would enroll about 122.9 million people. This means about 66 percent of all people currently covered under private health insurance would have their coverage shifted.

Why not strike the government-run plan altogether instead of debating about whether we want government bureaucrats red-taping needed care for patients because of costs or whether we want doctors and patients to decide what care is necessary? During the markup session I proposed an amendment that was very simple — it would strike a government-run health care plan. We know we can achieve bipartisan health reform if both sides are willing to find common ground. We agree on getting more bang for our buck by reforming the health insurance industry and encouraging patients to live healthier. Though over time — it may be three, five or ten years — private insurers won't be able to compete with a government-run plan and in the end, the majority of Americans will simply end up with one government-run program. While I have disagreements with other points in this bill, no single provision has anywhere near the potential to wreak havoc on patients' ability to get needed care as this "public option for government-run care." Unfortunately, Democrats in the Committee defeated my amendment on a party-line vote.

The major problem with government-run care is that care must be rationed to meet the budget. Even President Obama's budget director admits that their government-run plan does nothing to reduce costs. President Obama has likewise said that health care costs, if left unchecked, constitute "a threat to our economy." At a time when our nation is seeing skyrocketing unemployment rates, why would we roll the dice — and further "threaten our economy"? An editorial by the Washington Post examined the proposed health care legislation and note that the President called health care "a ticking time bomb for the federal budget." The paper goes on to say, "Logically, a critical test of the health reform proposal making its way through Congress is whether Congress can defuse that bomb through their plan. The answer, so far, is no."

The one trillion plus dollars in costs for the proposed health care overhaul will be passed on to employers and individuals — igniting major tax increases; resulting in more layoffs, more hiring freezes and more heartache for our economy. According to an editorial in the Wall Street Journal, the surtax this health care overhaul will implement is expected to hit job creators especially hard because more than six of every ten who earn that much are small business owners, operators or investors, according to a 2007 Treasury study. America's successful small businesses would pay higher tax rates than the Fortune 500, and for that matter, more than most companies around the world. The New York Post confirmed this in an article last week, stating that funding a massive health-care overhaul could have a job-killing effect because it will ultimately create record-high tax increases on top-earners, pressuring small-business owners to shed workers.

Statistics and research show that this health care overhaul could be disastrous for our economy by producing overwhelming deficits and ultimately implementing the wrong kind of change in our health care system. I believe health care reform is not a partisan issue, and I am reaching out to find middle ground that will truly solve the health care contingency in our nation. Reforming the health care system the right way is important to our nation, it is important to you

and it is important to me.

Please feel free to contact my office if we can be of assistance to you or your family. You can contact my office by mail, email or phone.